CONFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

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Working Paper on possible progress towards the suspension of nuclear and thermonuclear tests

Since the Moscow Partial Test Ban Treaty was negotiated in 1963, Canada has joined other members of the Committee in urging that the obligation to achieve the discontinuance of testing which was accepted by the parties to that Treaty should be fulfilled as soon as possible. Taking into consideration the fact that differing views regarding the nature of an adequate verification system for any ban on underground testing apparently represents the major obstacle to early progress, Canada and a number of other delegations have attempted to focus attention on the evident utility of international seismological data exchange as a method for discriminating between underground nuclear explosions and natural earthquakes. This has involved clarifying what resources would be available for the eventual establishment of an effective world-wide exchange of seismological information designed to facilitate the achievement of a comprehensive test ban. Efforts in this direction are continuing.

Resolution 2663(XXV) urges governments to consider and, wherever possible, implement methods of improving their capability to contribute high quality seismic data with assured international availability. The same resolution invited the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament "to co-operate in further study of this issue".

The extended delay in concluding an underground nuclear test ban and the increase in the rate and size of underground explosions which have lent additional urgency to the repeated calls by the United Nations General Assembly for the suspension of all testing, also raise the question of how interim restraints might be imposed in the immediate future. Pending the achievement of a total ban, the Canadian Delegation recommends that certain transitional or confidence-building measures should be considered which would, without raising verification problems, reduce underground testing and represent progress towards the objective of a comprehensive ban. Such measures, which could be of two general types, might include the following:

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(1) measures to help develop seismological identification techniques and facilities which could contribute to the effective verification of a comprehensive test ban through:

(a) advance notification of details of planned underground nuclear explosions in order to assist in further research on seismological identification methods; and

(b) undertakings to co-operate in the use, development and improvement of facilities for the monitoring of underground tests by seismological means;

(2) measures to reduce testing and guard against its harmful effects through:

(a) an undertaking to reduce testing, beginning with high yield testing, as an earnest on the part of the nuclear testing powers of their intent to work towards a complete test ban; and

(b) consideration of further measures to guard against environmental risks connected with underground testing.